

INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Indochina

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SUBJECT Police Controls and Travel and Communication
in Hanoi Area

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1. There is actually more freedom of movement within the city of Hanoi than is generally supposed abroad. This applies to all nationalities. There is an eleven o'clock curfew in Hanoi and after that hour everyone walking or riding, including Europeans, is supposedly stopped by one of the roving car patrols (French) or by the night foot police (French) for identification purposes. In actual practice, however, it is only the Orientals who are ordinarily questioned. Suspicious persons are, of course, stopped at any and all times of the day. With the exception of certain parts of the Chinese quarter catering to nightlife and other small areas of similar activity in various districts of the city, the streets are practically deserted after sundown.
2. The number of police in the Chinese section is proportionately greater than in any other area of the city. There are customarily very few outbreaks of any kind within the city during the day and the number of police in evidence on the streets is relatively few. At night, there are theoretically three or four Vietnamese policemen to each block of the Chinese district and about one Vietnamese policeman to every two blocks in other areas of the city. These are in addition to the previously mentioned roving French patrols.
3. With the exception of the Chinese section and the Rue de la Soie area which is predominantly Hindu, there are no precisely definite areas for any given nationality. There are Chinese living in all sections of the city and the same is true of the Vietnamese population. The French military are billeted throughout the city much to the irritation of the native population. The total population of Hanoi, exclusive of military forces, was estimated as of 1 October 1949 at 150,494, of which 12,000 are Chinese, 130,000 Vietnamese, 7,955 European, 512 Hindus and 27 Pakistani. Almost all the poorer elements of the population travel by bicycle. Others use cycloists and a few have automobiles. The Hanoi street car line, which is heavily patronized, runs only during the day. There are no other public conveyances although it is possible but difficult to hire a taxi. The airlines all run busses to and from Gia Lam Airport on the outskirts of Hanoi.
4. All residents of the city have to be registered with the local office of the French-controlled Surete. With the exception of those with diplomatic or government immunity, all residents must carry an identity card which must be presented on demand, day or night. Those who are exempt from carrying an

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identity card must nevertheless register. Until recently non-Europeans who wished to travel out of Hanoi by road had to apply to the French Surete for permission, giving reasons for the trip. Since October, Vietnamese residents of Hanoi have had to get permission from the Security Division of the Bao Dai Government Police. Other residents still apply at the office of the French Surete. It is customary, if not mandatory, for all Europeans leaving the city to notify the French Surete.

5. French and Vietnamese military posts (under French direction) surround the outskirts of the city at fairly widely separated points. The principal traffic in and out of the city is over the Hanoi-Haiphong road. Less than a year ago it was customary to travel the Hanoi-Haiphong road only in convoy. Currently, however, it can be used from dawn to 4:30 P.M. without convoy. 4:30 P.M. is the latest hour one can leave either city. The Hanoi-Haiphong road is dotted with military posts at two or three mile intervals. The road is in rather poor condition and is under constant repair. The truck traffic over this route is very heavy. The journey from Hanoi to Haiphong, a distance of 105 kilometers, takes from one and three quarters to two and a quarter hours, the road paralleling the Hanoi-Haiphong railway for a large part of the way. When entering or leaving the city of Hanoi by any fashion (road or rail) it is necessary to produce identification. Non-Vietnamese Orientals are required to have a laissez-passer from the French Surete. Vietnamese travellers are currently required to have a laissez-passer from the Security Division of the Bao Dai Government police.
6. The Hanoi-Haiphong railroad currently runs one train daily from each city. The train from Hanoi leaves at 10:00 A.M., usually carrying around 100 passengers, and may reach Haiphong anywhere from four to six hours later. It carries some mail and freight and occasionally soldiers, although the latter usually travel by truck. Viet Minh guerrilla forces intermittently blow up the Hanoi-Haiphong train. Recently, after a period of comparative quiet and freedom from attack, the train was blown up on three successive days. The guerrillas lay mines during the night then remain hidden in the rice a few yards away from the track and set off the mine when the train comes along. They operate similarly along the nearby Hanoi-Haiphong highway. Contact mines are also used by the guerrillas, especially in cases where the vegetation is insufficiently high to afford a place of concealment. One of the recent attacks on the Hanoi-Haiphong railroad was one of the worst that has occurred for a long time.
7. Mail, telephone, and cable services in Hanoi are still under the control of the French Government monopoly (Poste-Telephone-Telegraphe - PTT). The service in all three is very poor. In addition to telephone lines within the city limits of Hanoi, there are lines to Gia Lam and to Hadong. It is also possible via radio-telephone to call Saigon or Haiphong during certain hours of the day. Price for this service to Saigon is 75 piasters for three minutes and to Haiphong the price is 50 piasters for three minutes. Other radio-telephone connections are between Haiphong and Tourane and between Haiphong and Saigon.
8. All incoming and outgoing passengers at Gia Lam Airport, with the exception of those diplomatically or officially immune, are screened by French Surete representatives prior to departure. All non-immune baggage, particularly that of the Chinese, is frequently searched by the customs officials at the airport. While the airport is the only one available for civil use, it is operated and under the control of the French military which has a substantial establishment there.

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